

Career Decision Self-Efficacy of First-Year Undergraduate Students: The Role of Parental Support and Personality Traits

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to examine the role of parental support and personality traits to career decision self-efficacy among first-year undergraduate students. Two hundred and sixty first-year undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education at Universitas Negeri Semarang have participated in this study. The results revealed that parental support, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness have emerged as the significant predictors of career decision self-efficacy, while Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Openness may not be able to operate as predictors of career decision self-efficacy independently. Implications of parental support and personality traits measures to the prediction of career decision self-efficacy among first-year undergraduate students are discussed.

Keywords: *Big Five, Career Decision Self-efficacy, First-Year Undergraduate Students*

The researchers of career psychology have a vigorous interest in the study of career decidedness among undergraduate students (e.g., Harlow & Bowman, 2016; Penn & Lent, 2018; Gianakos, 1999; Wang, Jome, Haase, & Bruch, 2006). Career decision-making assumed as one of the vital tasks in the phase of both late adolescence and early adulthood (Super, 1990). Theorists in the field of human development generally approve that one of the prominent developmental tasks in the transition from late adolescence to young adulthood is making a career choice and striving to prepare for a proper role in the world of adult work (Hurlock, 1980; Savickas, 2002; Santrock, 2014). For many adolescents who decide to continue their studies in higher education, entering college is the primary step into adulthood (Santrock, 2014; Vondracek & Porfeli, 2003), which is believed to be able to provide benefits throughout their career path (Budiningsih, 2012).

College graduates have a greater chance of having more stable employment, higher earnings, more career mobility, and higher career achievement (Montgomery & Côté, 2003). Based on data from the Statistics Indonesia, the average earnings of the college graduate workers in 2018 were amounting 4.59 million rupiahs, the vocational and public high school graduate

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workers of 2.7 million rupiahs, the junior high school graduate workers of 2.02 million rupiahs, and the elementary school graduate workers of 1.71 million rupiahs. That is, the higher the level of education, the higher the average income earned. Of these opportunities, not surprisingly, many high school graduates may choose to continue their further studies.

On the other hand, however, they also bound to be aware of the very tight competition in the world of work. The Open Unemployment Rate for undergraduates in Indonesia until August 2018 reaches 5.98%, higher than in 2017 (5.18%) (The National Labor Force Survey of Indonesia, 2018). This percentage does not include the number of covert unemployed which is unpredictable. Various factors influence the high unemployment rate, namely limited employment opportunities, inappropriate job qualifications, and the lack of independence of job seekers for entrepreneurship (Handayani, 2015). It means that there is no guarantee for college graduates to obtain employment as expected unless having the fit competencies that require by workforce users.

In this context, the college period has become significantly challenging for undergraduate students to career decision-making. For many undergraduate students, making a career decision and selecting an academic major is not a straightforward process. It requires the ability to combine sundry of information related to personal and career. Unfortunately, not all individuals are prepared to determine their career choices since graduating from high school (Dennis, 2007). Although obtaining a good job is one of the principal reasons for going to college, many high school students enrolled and accepted into university without a vivid plan of a career (Dennis, 2007). They might be less able to explore themselves and the environment which causes a lack of understanding of employment opportunities and accurate information about job opportunities to make appropriate career choices (Ziebell, 2010).

Gordon (in Dennis, 2007) reported that between 20% and 50% of first-year undergraduate students uncertain regarding their academic major and finally their future career. They tend to use a little information that is important for choosing the academic major and does not execute the final stages of decision making, namely critical attitude and the possibility of changing strategies to utilize feedback. Consequently, around 50% to 70% of all college students incline to alteration their academic majors and career plans leastwise once during college. In this case, for completing the necessary tasks related to career decision making, the individual needs career decision self-efficacy (Penn & Lent, 2012).

According to several researchers, career decision self-efficacy refers to students' belief about their capabilities in using strategies or activities requisite for making a good career decision (Penn & Lent, 2018). It is related to self-efficacy concept of Bandura (1997), which describes the individual's belief in his or her capabilities to succeed in an expected certain situation. Further, self-efficacy would determine the individual's decision of behavioral choice and performance. Career decision self-efficacy consists of various components, such as self-appraisal, gathering job information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996). In line with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, students who have low levels of career decision self-efficacy may induce to inhibition of career-decision, whereas stronger levels of career decision self-efficacy would more likely lead increased involvement in career-decision behavior (Taylor & Betz, 1983; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996).

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Numerous studies focusing on career decisiveness revealed the contextual and personal factors of career decision self-efficacy (Guan, Capezio, Restubog, Read, Lajom, & Li, 2016; Yoo & Kim, 2012). The career construction theory pointed out that the family environment is a prominent contextual factor in the transition study-to-work (Garcia, Restubog, Toledano, Tolentino, & Rafferty, 2011), and ultimately on career development (Whiston & Keller, 2004). Understanding the importance of family in career decision-making self-efficacy is required, notably in a society that accentuates the family's role and closeness relationships between family members. The family process variables (e.g., parental support, parental expectations, and family relationship) fiddle a more significant role in career development than either family structural variables (e.g., single parent status, grade of parents' education, and parents' work background) or family socioeconomic status (Whiston & Keller, 2004).

By and large, Indonesians consider the family as a principal resource of reference for educational and career selections. Parental support provides resources to evolve their children's career decision self-efficacy in the encounter of academic defiances and impediments (Alliman-Brisset, Turner, & Skovholt, 2004). Particularly, the dimensions of family support, namely the informational support and high expectations have been correlated with career decision self-efficacy on college students (Fouad, Cotter, Fitzpatrick, Kantamneni, Carter, & Bernfeld, 2010). The proof of prior studies shows the parental support can espouse career decision self-efficacy (Guan et al., 2016; Garcia, Restubog, Bordia, Bordia, & Roxas, 2015).

Personality traits have also viewed as one of the most notable personal antecedents among various career variables related to career development and decision-making processes (Yoo & Kim, 2012; Smith, 2011). Pervin, Cervone, & John (2005) stated that personality traits are the characteristic of a person that causes the emergence of consistency of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. In addition, everyone also has different behavioral patterns and qualities in themselves. Previous studies have investigated the impacts of the Big Five personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness) on definite career-related variables, such as career maturity, career interest, and career decision self-efficacy (Penn & Lent, 2012; Yoo & Kim, 2012, Smith, 2011).

Several studies confirmed that Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism had a significant association to career decision self-efficacy, while Agreeableness and Openness have a weak correlation. Consistently, findings of prior studies showed the positive correlation between Extraversion, Conscientiousness and career decision self-efficacy, meanwhile between Neuroticism had a negative relationship (Page, Bruch, & Haase, 2008; Yoo & Kim, 2012; Pent & Lent, 2012). Nevertheless, enticingly, some studies uttered that the strength of the correlation among career decision self-efficacy and the Big Five personality traits can be different conform to the characteristics of some groups, for example in terms of gender (Yoo & Kim, 2012).

Based on the above studies, there is an obvious need to investigate parental support and personality traits related to career decision-making among first-year undergraduate students. Understanding the relationship between these variables is expected to help the college to identify vulnerable populations who have difficulty making career decisions according to the individual's characteristics. Thus, the following research questions were addressed in the current study of first-year undergraduate students: (1) Do male and female first-year

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undergraduate students differ in career decision self-efficacy? (2) Do parental support and the Big Five personality traits predict career decision self-efficacy simultaneously, after accounting for gender? (3) Which factor among parental support and the Big Five personality traits emerged as strong predictors for career decision self-efficacy?

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Participants were 260 first-year undergraduate students enrolled in Faculty of Education at Universitas Negeri Semarang in Indonesia. A hundred and ten (57.7%) were male and 150 (42.3%) were female. Their age ranged from 17 to 19 years ($M = 17.58$, $SD = .45$).

Instruments

- 1. Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSSES):** The CDSSES was used to measure students' belief about their capabilities to accomplish tasks necessary for making a career decision successfully. This scale is a modification of the CDSE scale developed by Taylor & Betz (1983). It consists of 25-item scale according to five career competencies viewed as important for career development (Crites, 1978), namely creating accurate self-appraisal, collecting job information, selecting a goal, planning, and problem-solving. The participants were asked to complete and rate their level of confidence on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (no confidence at all) to 5 (complete confidence). A High total score pointed that the individual has a high level of career decision-self-efficacy.
- 2. Big Five Inventory:** The Big Five personality traits were measured using a 44-item of BFI developed by John & Srivastava (1999). In BFI, each trait has a different number of items, comprising Extraversion (8 items), Agreeableness (9 items), Conscientiousness (9 items), Neuroticism (8 items), and Openness (10 items). The participants were asked to rate their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for a favorable item, while for the unfavorable item have a reverse range of scores. High scores on each subscale of BFI indicate a high tendency of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness.
- 3. Career-Related Parent Support Scale:** Perceived parental support was measured using a 27-item Career-Related Parental Support Scale (CRPSS) developed by Turner et al (2003) according to four sub-scales, involving instrumental assistance (7 items), career-related modeling (7 items), verbal encouragement (6 items), and emotional support (7 items). Participants were requested to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a greater level of career-related parental support.

Procedure

All respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire booklet consisting of informed consent, general instructions, demographic data, and then the research scales (CDSE-SF, BFI, and CRPSS). The completed questionnaire was returned to the researchers.

RESULTS

The reliability coefficients, means, standard deviations and t-test results according to gender and of career decision self-efficacy, parental support, and the Big Five personality traits ($N = 260$) are presented in Table 1. Significant gender differences were found for Neuroticism ($t(258) = -5.58$, $p < .001$), Conscientiousness ($t(258) = -2.05$, $p < .05$), and Agreeableness ($t(258) = -2.11$, $p < .05$). Females were found being more neurotic ($M = 25.57$, $SD = 4.97$),

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more conscientious ($M = 29.36, SD = 4.60$), and more agreeable ($M = 33.93, SD = 3.64$) than males ($M = 22.08, SD = 5.00; M = 28.19, SD = 4.49; M = 32.95, SD = 3.79$, respectively) in their first-year college. The t-test results for other personality traits (Extraversion and Openness), parental support, and career decision self-efficacy revealed no significant differences between gender ($t(258) = .84, p > .05; t(258) = -.86, p > .05; t(258) = -1.25, p > .05$, respectively).

Table No. 1 Comparison of Career-Related Parent Support and the Big Five Based on Gender

Variable	Total (N = 260)			Male (N = 110)		Female (N = 150)		Gender t
	α	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
CDSE ^a	.81	73.00	7.08	72.35	7.89	73.47	6.40	-1.25
CRPS ^b	.89	96.36	10.162	95.73	9.62	96.83	10.55	-.86
Extraversion	.81	26.86	5.13	27.17	5.71	26.6	4.67	.84
Agreeableness	.75	33.51	3.73	32.95	3.79	33.93	3.64	-2.11*
Conscientiousness	.75	28.87	4.58	28.19	4.49	29.36	4.60	-2.05*
Neuroticism	.82	24.1	5.26	22.08	5.00	25.57	4.97	-5.58**
Openness	.62	34.9	3.93	35.00	3.96	34.80	3.98	.40

Note. ^aCDSE = career decision self-efficacy, ^bCRPS = career-related parent support; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Description of the data in Table 2 provides an overview of scores distribution of career decision self-efficacy. This information is used to describe the participants' level of career decision self-efficacy.

Table No. 2 Overview of Career Decision Self-Efficacy

Score Range	Category	Frequency	Valid Percent
$X \leq 50$	Very low	0	0%
$50 < X \leq 67$	Low	56	21.54%
$67 < X \leq 83$	Moderate	182	70%
$83 < X \leq 100$	High	22	8.46%
$X > 100$	Very high	0	0%
Total		260	100%

As presented in Table 2, career decision self-efficacy of first-year undergraduate students was mostly at a moderate level ($N = 182, 70\%$). Furthermore, fifty-six participants (21.54%) had a low level and 8.46% ($N = 22$) participants had a high level of career decision self-efficacy. Meanwhile, there were no participants involved in the very low and very high categories.

Table No. 3 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Career decision Self-Efficacy (N = 260)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Step 1 Gender	-1.11	.88	-.08
Step 2 Gender	-.87	.85	-.06
CRPS	.22	.04	.32***
Step 3 Gender	-1.36	.85	-.09
CRPS	.16	.04	.22***
Extraversion	.37	.08	.27***
Agreeableness	-.19	.11	-.10
Conscientiousness	.35	.09	.24***
Neuroticism	-.12	.09	-.09
Openness	.14	.10	.08

Note. $R = .08, R^2 = .01$ for step 1; $R = .33, R^2 = .11, \Delta R^2 = .10$ for step 2; $R = .54, R^2 = .29, \Delta R^2 = .19$ for step 3. *** $p < .001$.

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As shown in Table 3, results from the first step revealed that gender was not the significant predictor of career decision self-efficacy variance ($R^2 = .01$, $F(1,258) = 1.57$, $\beta = -.08$, $p > .05$). In the second step, entering parental support resulted in a significant increase in the amount of explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .10$, $\Delta F(1, 257) = 15.21$, $p < .001$. Parental support ($\beta = .32$, $p < .001$), was significant predictor of career decision self-efficacy. In the third step, entering Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness resulted in a significant increase in career decision self-efficacy variance, $\Delta R^2 = .19$, $\Delta F(5, 252) = 14.68$, $p < .001$. Parental support ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$), Extraversion ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$), and Conscientiousness ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$) emerged as a significant individual predictors of career decision self-efficacy, while gender, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Openness were not statistically significant. After accounting for all variables, parental support, Extraversion and Conscientiousness were the significant individual predictors of career decision self-efficacy. In other words, in model 3, the Big Five personality traits, mainly the trait Extraversion and Conscientiousness variables explained an additional 19% of the variance in career decision self-efficacy.

DISCUSSION

The findings corroborate our hypotheses proofing the unique predictions of parental support and the Big Five personality traits of career decision self-efficacy of first-year undergraduate students. Firstly, empirical data of the present study divulged that there were no differences in career decision self-efficacy between males and females, least of all at the first-year undergraduate students, in any step of the analysis. It was consistent with the finding of prior studies (Yoo & Kim, 2012; Betz et al, 1996). The result of meta-analysis revealed that gender may not be an obtrusive factor in the career decision self-efficacy but may interpret indirect relationships mediated or moderated by other variables (Choi et al, 2012).

In the hierarchical regression, parental support maintained its significant contribution to the prediction of career decision self-efficacy. However, when the Big Five personality traits added, the explanatory power of parental support was decreased. Unfortunately, only both of Extraversion and Conscientiousness of the Big Five personality traits have significant explanatory strength, whereas agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness have not emerged as critical predictors in the career decision self-efficacy of the first-year undergraduate students.

Career decision self-efficacy has described as students' belief about their capabilities to accomplish tasks necessary for making a career decision successfully (Betz & Taylor, 2012). It indicates one's cognitive and future performance proficiencies appraisal (Bandura, 1997) which is presumed as the principal mechanism of self-regulation for the personal agency (Guan et al., 2016). As indicated by self-efficacy theory (e.g., Bandura, 1997), students who have high career decision self-efficacy would be more likely increased complicity in career decision behavior, whereas low career-decision self-efficacy may obstruct career decision making adaptability. Prior works of career decision self-efficacy have suggested that high levels of career decision self-efficacy were related to high parental support (Guan et al., 2016; Garcia et al., 2015). According to the current study, career decision self-efficacy of first-year undergraduate students was mostly at a moderate level. It means that late adolescents urgently entail career-related parental support as the resources of their self-efficacy (instrumental support, verbal and emotional reinforcement, and modeling) in determining future careers.

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Furthermore, Extraversion and Conscientiousness were the two-trait predictors which had significant effects on career decision self-efficacy. In line with previous research, Extraversion and Conscientiousness were positively correlate with career decision self-efficacy (Yoo & Kim, 2012). We found support from prior work confirming that the students who have the higher level of both Extraversion and self-efficacy inclined more engage in the career exploration and accomplished decisional comfort when they have higher levels of conscientiousness (Pent & Lent, 2018). Conversely, students who have the lowest both Extraversion and Conscientiousness have low self-efficacy in the decision-making process. That is, they have low energy or less persistent, disorganized, and less able to overcome with stressors every day, so that less prominent in college. Consequently, it may inhibit their engagement to explore the career.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study had several limitations. First, all the Big Five personality traits may be not able to operate as predictors of career decision self-efficacy independently. However, they were expected to have the ability to explain career decision self-efficacy simultaneously. That is, each trait may complement each other in explaining career decision self-efficacy. Therefore, further research needs to consider the role of the mutual association of Extraversion and Conscientiousness to career decision self-efficacy for another sample in different levels of education (e.g. students of junior high school, public, and private senior high school, vocational high school, boarding school, etc) and different courses area.

Second, we only studied the contribution of parental support generally to career decision self-efficacy. This variable maintained its contribution in explaining career decision self-efficacy in each step of hierarchical multiple regression analysis. For the next research, it would be more useful to examine students' perception of father and mother support specifically.

The implication of the findings of this study is to provide interventions directed at modifying the role of personality traits and parental support strategies to improve career decision self-efficacy. Various efforts can utilize the theoretical sources of self-efficacy, such as providing training on career adaptability to undergraduate students periodically. It is useful to help to enhance career decision self-efficacy which ultimately affects individual career decision making. Further, this intervention might be worthwhile to surmount the obstacles the low level of extraversion, conscientiousness or parental support on typical clients.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of results, the conclusions of this study are:

- 1) Career decision self-efficacy of participants are in the moderate category;
- 2) There are no differences in career decision self-efficacy between males and females;
- 3) Simultaneously, parental support and the Big Five personality traits provide an effective contribution for predicting career decision self-efficacy after accounting for gender;
- 4) Parental support, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness emerged as significant predictors of career decision self-efficacy.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not a conflict of interests

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